458 W 25

NYC 10001

Saturday 7/10/71

Dear Joe,

Some schedules:

Andrew Wilson: 6 years old on July 15; on July 16 leaves for Camp Beach Isle of the Hebrew Kindergarten and Infants Home, Inc., Far Rockaway, New York. He is to be fetched on July 29 by my father, & driven to Maryland.

Kate and Ara: depart 7/23/71 for Madison-Felicia, return 8/11.

William S.: departs (with luck; God willing; given the fulfillment of conditions enumerated above) on 7/22 (girls to spend night elsewhere) in car (to be bought this week) for Tilghman, to leave, deposit or dump bicycles dollhouse and last year's shapeless bathing suits-- plus ten years of PMLS for the silverfish to eat-- and next morning, Friday, 7/23, begin driving to Florida, Cape Kennedy, with press accreditation and a few influential phone calls, to see the launching of Apollo 15, to tour the Vehicle Assembly Building, then to drive to Nag's Head, to stay with Bob and Laura Benson, then to Maryland, to fetch Andrew from my father's care, and then maybe stay at Tilghman until time to fetch the girls, at least from 8/11 to 9/9 to be at Tilghman. To have, the schedule says, typed through a version of Apollo before reaching Cape Kennedy, and then to do another run-through at Tilghman. With luck. God willing. Circumstances permitting.

A quotation: "In a text on Flaubert's Tentation de Saint-Antoine published in the Cahiers Renaud-Barrault, Foucault equates Anthony's lurid visions with Flaubert's painstaking erudition, and with the drudgery of Bouvard and Pecuchet. For erudition is not a sign of Alexandrianism but of a cultural mutation which ushered in the nineteenth century, with its museums, its laboratories, and its libraries, Wces institutions verdâtres où les livres s'accumulent et où croît doucement la lente, la certain végétation de leur savoir."

I have been reading Local Anaesthetic, my life was changed (for good-- better--and for good--permanently--by Doris Lessing, Four-Gated City,

the French have certain advantages over us.

and I have been having my vision cleared by Roger Shattuck, Proust's Binoculars. Which brings us to some familiar themes, and to why I am now ready to read Ancient History... Shattuck quotes Stendhal: "In Henri Brulard Stendhal justifies his love for mathematics because it "does not admit hypocrisy and vagueness, my two pet aversions." I can use this in thinking about loyalty (fidelity) to things; vagueness becomes a disloyalty to things (or people), and so vagueness is hypocrisy when it is a lack of commitment (precise commitment) to a thing, a person. Friendship is then manifest as unequivocal precision, so the possibility (at last) of my relating the (exacting) theme (friendship) of Ancient History to the style of non-possessive exactness. The point appears in The Confidence Man when on the Fidele friendship (commitment, loyalty) is discussedin a style which is questioned: "Strange, that in a work of amusement, this severe fidelity to real life should be exacted by anyone..." XXXIII So fidelity is a middle term between style & content. The point is in Blake: "He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars. General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite & flatterer, For Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars." This fidelity relates to counterfeits & possessiveness (as opposite of loyalty) because the owner, coming to possess a counterfeit, is enjoying or suffering poetic justice--that is, he possesses something of no reality because the possession of things deprives them of their reality. Things being used as

signs are possessed in the sense I mean, and use as a sign is flattening; someone using something as a sign (symbol) is being disloyal to it; the use of signs engenders false signs (fake tokens, wooden nickles); the astronauts choose signs of eagles and olive branches to show their nationalistic devotion but the use of signs is hypocritical (using it for something other than itself--they don't care a thing about those eagles) and vague. So I've had in the back of my mind your Hind, peculiarly non-possessive, whose possession by the kidnapping brought him to possess--use--flatten out--people into phantoms, counterfeits, counters, until the reversal and inheriting of himself, the self-possession. And I will go back to A, B, and C tomorrow. Stevens: "the sky will be much friendlier then than now..."******

I take up space with some success... I am intraining--no drinking, not much of anything, but also thanks to Doris Lessing, I am sleeping for the first time I can remember--it's as though I didn't know what sleep is, or can be. So I write daily miscellaneous notes on one typewriter--such as I read over to write the prior page to you--and write systematically, bookishly, on the other. I am on page 40 & am still introducing. I do feel that I am working well, though I can manage only a few sansible hours a day, & the conflict with the children for time and composure is intense. Their mother is in Amsterdam, one hears; no birthday cards, etc., and lots of 9 year old misery: Ara's Poem: "As I cry for her, I hope she hears my call, My tears rowls down my cheek, In a yellow golden ball, I don't know when she shall return, She should have long ago, Every night I cry for her, As she moves on, I don't know what to think of her, I have wated long. Mama!!"

So I go on, still expecting some principle I am looking for to arise from the midst of this domestic squalor--something that will cut across washing dishes and picking up underwear from the bathroom floor, & touch infinity. Which is not to sound like Stephen Hero & the soul of the commonest object etc etc...

Kate says hello; thank you for the postcard; we have to bring Andrew to school with us next year. Let Ara speak.

Ara: I say hello; we might be in the same class next year; I got an excellent report card except for on spelling I got fair; good-bye.

Kate: My report card was excellent and my reading level was 5 plus. Have a nice time.

"satiric ambiguities" — dangerous because the tone must be friendly to the facts.

I have to write for an hour now, if Ihave an hour to write now, to provide a transition from Apollo & science to Apollo & technology, and transitions do seem to be my undoing. I do feel that I am on some useful track--Butor's Passing Time, Grass's Local Anaesthetic, do seem accessible; but I am also in over my head at every point. I like the sound of Lookout Cartridge, "incapable of over- or understatement." Watch those English with their underhanded & backhanded litotes. "Backwater" is the title of a volume of D. Richardson's Pilgrimage. I think that this is an example of the way out: "As with the nests in the geometrical towns of the associate penguin and pelican, these bunks were disposed with Philadelphian regularity, but, like the cradle of the oriole, they were pendulous, and, moreover, were, so to speak, three-story cradles; the description of one of which will suffice for all" Confidence Man XV. Or to read leg- in the etymological appendix of the Am.Herit.Dict. I am putting off my transition. On to p.41.

My love to all of you and England,

I got the transition, & am onto a highway.

Bill